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The CENTRAL SPIRIT Framework: A Narrative Review of Organizational Culture at Central Philippine University

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Abstract

This narrative literature review examines the organizational culture of Central Philippine University (CPU) through the CENTRAL SPIRIT framework an institution-specific acrostic representing 13 interconnected dimensions of Centralian identity. Founded in 1905 by American Baptist missionaries, CPU has sustained a distinctive faith-based culture despite pressures of secularization, generational change, and market-driven higher education. Following Baumeister and Leary's (1997) narrative review methodology, the study purposively synthesized historical documents, institutional publications, dissertations (2007–2025), and University Research Center satisfaction surveys (AY 2024–2025). The CENTRAL SPIRIT framework served as both the organizing structure for data collection and the analytical lens for synthesizing evidence across sources, with each dimension guiding theme identification and cross-temporal comparison. Findings reveal strong continuity in spiritual vitality ('Very Satisfied' levels across students, faculty, and staff in AY 2024–2025 URC summaries, adaptive reinforcement of core values and servant leadership post-2019, and persistent relational/academic stability, with minor resource-related tensions (e.g., scholarship satisfaction decline). The synthesized evidence demonstrates that the 13 CENTRAL SPIRIT dimensions manifest in worship/CEW practices (C, T, R, I), servant/pastoral leadership (S, P), SEAL values integration (I), alumni loyalty (L), faith-grounded excellence (A), and holistic formation (T). Robust alignment exists between espoused Baptist-Christian ideals and empirical outcomes (high satisfaction, commitment correlations, continuity across time), demonstrating the framework's utility as both legacy and diagnostic tool. Implications for sustaining faith-based culture include intentional leadership modeling, deeper faith-learning integration, equitable resource strategies, relational reinforcement, and regular cultural monitoring to counter contemporary challenges. The study contributes a culturally resonant analytical lens for mission-driven institutions and offers practical guidance for renewal in complex academic environments.

Keywords: Central Spirit, organizational culture, faith-based higher education, Baptist identity, servant leadership, Christian education, narrative literature review

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INTRODUCTION

Faith-based higher education institutions occupy a unique position in the global academic landscape. They must transmit knowledge and professional competencies while forming moral character, spiritual maturity, and social responsibility in students. Their organizational culture shapes educational practices, leadership behavior, and community life, which are rooted in religious traditions through shared beliefs, rituals, and institutional narratives.

Central Philippine University (CPU), founded in 1905 by American Baptist missionaries, is one of the oldest Protestant universities in the Philippines. CPU pursues a holistic philosophy of education that integrates faith and learning, expressed in its motto, *Scientia et Fides* (Science and Faith). The University emphasizes the spiritual, intellectual, physical, and social development of students within a Christian environment (Jalando-on et al., 2023). One major goal is "to provide a Christian environment that is conducive to holistic learning," highlighting spiritual formation in its mission.

For over 100 years, CPU has developed a distinctive institutional culture called the "Central Spirit." Students, faculty, staff, administrators, and alumni recognize this as a defining feature of Centralian identity. Early analyses noted that Centralians describe their way of life through shared values, commitment to service, and loyalty to the University (Jalando-on, 2007). Studies have established that the Central Spirit functions as a bond, sense of belongingness, and manifestation of a shared Christian faith (Giron-Importante, 2007).

Despite this cultural heritage, concerns regarding the transmission of CPU's Baptist identity have emerged. Studies have noted that cultural dilution is linked to generational change, religious diversity, and shifting educational priorities (Jalando-on, 2007). These concerns highlight the importance of examining how institutional culture adapts to and renews in changing contexts. Faith-based institutions face the pressures of secularization, market-oriented management, and technological transformation.

Recent assessments indicate that CPU has sustained its faith-based identity through leadership practices, curricular integration, and spiritual formation programs. Studies have shown strong adherence to ethical leadership and community-oriented governance among administrators (H. Jalando-on, 2024). Research on the Christ Emphasis Week (CEW) shows high awareness and commitment to Christian life among students and alumni (Sian, 2024). Surveys reveal high spiritual satisfaction among students, faculty, and staff, suggesting that CPU's cultural foundations remain intact.

Recent research has demonstrated the operationalization of Central Philippine's Core Values in academic programs. A 2025 study by Java, Labis, Alayon, Gutierrez, and Jerez examined the influence of integrating Faith, Character, Justice, Stewardship, and Excellence into Student Enhancement Activities for Life (SEAL) classes. Their findings showed that students were aware of, satisfied with, and experienced meaningful changes from values-based instruction. Through experiential learning and reflection, students demonstrated the practical application of institutional values. This study provides empirical evidence that the Central Spirit of CPU is transmitted through curricular mechanisms.

The complexity of university governance, demographic shifts, and evolving pedagogical models necessitate reflection on institutional culture. Understanding how historical ideals, leadership practices, and experiences converge is vital to sustaining mission-driven education. While studies have examined aspects of CPU's life, no synthesis has systematically integrated these works into a unified cultural framework.

Filling this gap is important because a cohesive cultural synthesis provides faith-based institutions like CPU with a diagnostic tool to monitor cultural health amid secularization pressures, generational turnover, and market-driven changes in Philippine higher education. It enables proactive renewal strategies, such as targeted leadership development or curricular reinforcement, to prevent dilution of core Baptist identity. Theoretically, it contributes to organizational culture literature by demonstrating how an institution-specific acrostic can serve as a culturally resonant lens for integrating historical, empirical, and normative evidence in mission-driven contexts. Practically, it offers leaders and educators a structured framework to guide policy, formation programs, and succession planning, ensuring the enduring transmission of the Central Spirit in contemporary settings.

This study addresses this gap by examining CPU's organizational culture through the lens of the CENTRAL SPIRIT framework. Originally an institutional acrostic rooted in CPU's historical ethos, CENTRAL SPIRIT represents 13 interconnected dimensions of Centralian life:

- C – Commitment to Jesus Christ, His Mission, and the Church
- E – Education as a Liberating Tool from Poverty
- N – Never Forgetting its Historical Roots

- T – Trait: Missionary Attitude and Orientation
- R – Religious Principles of Baptists
- A – Academic Excellence
- L – Love for Alma Mater and Fellow Centralians

- S – Servant Leadership
- P – Pastoral Leadership
- I – Incorporation of Core Values
- R – Role of Baptist Leadership and Institutional Relationships
- I – Integration of Fides in All Studies
- T – Total Development of the Person

Each dimension is operationally defined in this review as a thematic category encompassing: (1) historical/institutional articulations (e.g., Jalando-on et al., 2023; Giron-Importante, 2007), (2) empirical manifestations in practices, programs, and survey data (e.g., leadership behaviors, spiritual satisfaction scores, values integration in SEAL classes), and (3) observable patterns of continuity, tension, or adaptation across sources from 2007–2025.

The framework guided the review and analysis through an iterative process consistent with Baumeister and Leary (1997): (a) initial thematic mapping of sources to the 13 dimensions; (b) synthesis of convergent evidence (e.g., high spiritual satisfaction reinforcing Commitment to Christ) and divergent evidence (e.g., perceived faith-academics imbalance or scholarship satisfaction decline); (c) cross-temporal comparison to trace shifts/continuities (e.g., from implicit post-war resilience to explicit core values institutionalization); and (d) interpretive integration to evaluate cultural coherence and sustainability. This structured application transforms CENTRAL SPIRIT from a symbolic slogan into an empirically grounded analytical tool, organizing findings thematically in the Discussion while drawing on Results for evidence-based interpretation.

Specifically, this study aims to: first, synthesize major institutional and scholarly sources documenting CPU's cultural development from 2007 to 2025; second, analyze how the dimensions of CENTRAL SPIRIT manifest in leadership practices, academic programs, and community life; third, examine the alignment between institutional ideals and empirical outcomes; and fourth, identify the implications for sustaining faith-based organizational culture in contemporary higher education. By articulating the Central Spirit as an empirically grounded cultural construct, this study contributes to the literature on faith-based university culture. It provides leaders, educators, and policymakers with a framework to strengthen mission-driven education in complex academic environments.

METHODS

Research Design. This study employed a narrative literature review design based on the methodological framework articulated by Baumeister and Leary (1997). This approach was adopted because the present study does not seek to test a single hypothesis empirically, but rather to integrate, synthesize, and interpret existing historical, institutional, and empirical studies to articulate the culture of Central Philippine University as embodied in the acrostic CENTRAL SPIRIT.

This design supports the study's objective of presenting a coherent and conceptually unified analysis of CPU's organizational culture rather than a fragmented or merely descriptive summary of previous research.

Narrative Literature Review Framework. Guided by Baumeister and Leary's (1997) framework for narrative reviews, this synthesis prioritizes integration over enumeration, emphasizing conceptual convergence across sources to form a coherent understanding of CPU's culture.

Key principles applied include:

1. ***Integration of Findings.*** Existing studies, documents, and narratives were synthesized to show how Baptist identity, Christian education, leadership, and values collectively shape CPU's culture, constructing a unified "bigger picture" of the Central Spirit.

2. ***Concept-Centered Analysis.*** Analysis focused on ideas (e.g., organizational culture, faith integration, servant leadership) rather than individual authors, with parenthetical citations.

3. ***Precise Analytical Language.*** Descriptive claims, empirical findings, and theoretical assertions were distinguished using verbs like demonstrates, articulates, underscores, affirms, and challenges.

4. ***Narrative and Thematic Structure.*** The CENTRAL SPIRIT acrostic organized the discussion, with each dimension as an analytic category weaving historical, policy, and empirical evidence into a unified narrative.

5. ***Recognition of Convergent and Divergent Evidence.*** Affirming and critical observations were included; tensions (e.g., leadership succession, identity evolution) were interpreted as indicators of cultural transition.

Sources of Data. The narrative synthesis drew from purposively selected sources representing CPU's cultural development (2007–2025), focusing on relevance to organizational culture, Baptist identity, leadership, spiritual formation, and values integration. Inclusion criteria emphasized: (1) direct focus on CPU (or closely contextualized private Philippine HE); (2) recency and empirical/historical depth; (3) diversity of perspectives (students, faculty, staff, alumni, administrators); (4) alignment with CENTRAL SPIRIT themes. A number of exclusion criteria was also applied to: non-CPU-specific works, pre-2007 sources, non-empirical opinion pieces, or materials lacking verifiable institutional origin.

Sources were located via: CPU's official repository (BAHÁNDÌAN at repository.cpu.edu.ph), University Research Center archives, internal library holdings, and direct access to institutional publications/dissertations defended at CPU.

Categories included:

1. ***Empirical studies and dissertations (2007–2025).*** Primarily unpublished doctoral/master's works defended at CPU (e.g., Giron-Importante, 2007; Sian, 2024; Jalando-on, 2024; Java et al., 2025), plus related reports. These are not peer-reviewed in external journals but underwent CPU graduate committee review and defense.

2. ***Institutional publications/policy documents.*** Official CPU outputs (e.g., CPU Core Values booklet [Jalando-on, 2019, CPU Press]; We Are CPU: Our Reasons for Being [Jalando-on et al., 2023, CPU publication]; philosophy/mission statements; faith posture). Authored/edited by CPU administrators (often lead author Jalando-on), published internally for stakeholder dissemination.

3. ***Historical texts.*** CPU-commissioned or archived works on origins, missionary era, and post-war development (e.g., referenced in Jalando-on et al., 2023).

4. ***Leadership/organizational studies.*** Contextual works on servant leadership/faculty commitment in private HE, integrated sparingly for broader framing.

5. ***Key integrated works.*** Jalando-on (2007; 2019; et al., 2023), Giron-Importante (2007), Sian (2024), Jalando-on (2024), Java et al. (2025), and University Research Center satisfaction surveys (2024–2025; internal institutional data collection, not externally published).

This purposive, institution-focused selection ensured depth in mission-aligned evidence while acknowledging internal orientation.

Data Construction Process. The sources were purposively selected to represent CPU's cultural development from 2007 to 2025, focusing on relevance, recency, and diversity of perspectives (students, faculty, staff, alumni, administrators). No exhaustive systematic

search was conducted, consistent with narrative review goals of interpretive synthesis rather than comprehensive enumeration (Baumeister & Leary, 1997).

Inclusion focused on: (1) empirical studies/dissertations on CPU culture, leadership, spiritual programs, or values integration; (2) official institutional publications (philosophy, mission, core values, faith posture statements); (3) historical texts on Baptist origins and development; and (4) recent survey data from the University Research Center (2024–2025). Exclusion applied to non-CPU-specific works or pre-2007 sources unless foundational.

The process was iterative: initial review of core texts (Jalando-on, 2007; Giron-Importante, 2007) identified recurring themes; these were mapped to the CENTRAL SPIRIT dimensions; subsequent sources were incorporated if they provided convergent, divergent, or updating evidence. This selective, concept-driven approach ensured depth in mission-aligned materials while acknowledging limitations in external/generalizability.

Analytical Procedure. The analysis followed an iterative and reflective process consistent with Baumeister and Leary (1997). Sources selected per the above criteria were reviewed iteratively. The procedure involved:

1. Identifying recurring cultural themes across sources;
2. Mapping these themes onto the CENTRAL SPIRIT framework;
3. Comparing empirical findings with institutional ideals and historical intentions;
4. Synthesizing convergent insights to articulate CPU's culture as an organizational and faith-based phenomenon.

Through this systematic process, the CENTRAL SPIRIT emerged not only as an institutional slogan, but also as an empirically grounded, historically sustained, and organizationally embedded cultural construct.

Ethical Considerations. As a narrative synthesis of publicly available or institutional documents and defended dissertations, no primary data collection occurred, and formal ethics approval was not required. All cited works are credited appropriately. Where possible, correspondence with original authors (e.g., for clarification on unpublished details) was pursued respectfully, with permissions noted internally where applicable. No confidential data were used.

Limitations. This study has several limitations inherent to narrative reviews and the source base. First, reliance on predominantly internal CPU sources (institutional publications, dissertations defended at CPU, internal surveys) introduces potential insider bias, as most empirical works involve CPU-affiliated authors or participants. Social desirability bias may inflate satisfaction survey results (e.g., spiritual/academic ratings), given the faith-based context and institutional administration of instruments.

Second, the purposive selection prioritized depth in aligned materials but may omit dissenting voices, exit/alumni negative feedback, counterevidence from external critics, or broader comparative studies. Few sources pre-2007 were included beyond foundational references, potentially limiting long-term historical nuance.

Third, many core sources (dissertations, internal reports) are not peer-reviewed in external journals, though they underwent CPU academic scrutiny.

These constraints reflect the insider, context-specific nature of the review. External validation such as comparative analyses with other Baptist/faith-based universities, independent audits, or longitudinal alumni tracking -- could strengthen the Central Spirit construct in future research. Despite these, convergent evidence across time and stakeholders supports the synthesis.

RESULTS

This section presents the synthesized findings organized according to the study's four research objectives: (1) to describe the documented cultural development of Central Philippine University from 2007 to 2025; (2) to analyze how the dimensions of the CENTRAL SPIRIT manifest in leadership practices, academic programs, and community life; (3) to examine the alignment between espoused institutional ideals and empirical outcomes; and (4) to identify implications for sustaining faith-based organizational culture in contemporary higher education.

Objective 1: To describe the documented cultural development of Central Philippine University from 2007 to 2025.

Synthesized sources reveal a clear trajectory across three phases. First, foundational qualitative studies (Jalando-on, 2007; Giron-Importante, 2007) established the Central Spirit as a unifying force characterized by shared faith, belongingness, and vocational consciousness. Second, explicit institutional articulation occurred post-2019, marked by formal publication of CPU Core Values (Jalando-on, 2019) and consolidation in *We Are CPU: Our Reasons for Being* (Jalando-on et al., 2023). Third, recent empirical studies (Sian, 2024; Jalando-on, 2024; Java et al., 2025) provided quantitative validation, with University Research Center (URC) satisfaction surveys (AY 2024–2025) reporting student spiritual life satisfaction at M = 95.64 ("Very Satisfied"), faculty at 97.13, and staff at 96.43.

Objective 2: To analyze how the dimensions of the CENTRAL SPIRIT manifest in leadership practices, academic programs, and community life.

The synthesized evidence reveals the following manifestations across the 13 dimensions:

C – Commitment to Jesus Christ: URC surveys reported 'Very Satisfied' spiritual ratings; Sian (2024) found complete CEW awareness and high Christian commitment; Jalando-on (2007) documented worship practices, prayer, and University Church as intentional cultural practices.

E – Education as Liberating Tool: Scholarship satisfaction rated 75.76 (down from 80.2); Jalando-on (2007) documented work-study and scholarship systems; Sian (2024) noted enrollment due to dependent benefits.

N – Never Forgetting Historical Roots: Giron-Importante (2007) demonstrated Central Spirit sustained through collective memory of missionaries, rebuilding, and alumni sacrifice; Jalando-on (2007) noted absence of formal history curriculum.

T – Missionary Attitude: Jalando-on (2007) reported majority viewed work as Christian ministry; Giron-Importante (2007) showed employees go beyond contractual obligations; URC surveys showed improved working environment satisfaction.

R – Baptist Principles: Six principles documented (Jalando-on, 2007)—Biblical authority, soul competency, regenerated membership, local church autonomy, church-state separation, religious liberty—remain foundational; Faith Posture Statement:(Jalando-on et al., 2023) affirms evangelical-ecumenical stance.

A – Academic Excellence: URC surveys indicated high academic service, instructional quality ratings; Jalando-on (2024) found teaching performance satisfactory across demographics; Jalando-on (2007) documented pride in accreditation, CHED autonomous status, ISO certification.

L – Love for Alma Mater: Giron-Importante (2007) identified "family/home" metaphors; Jalando-on (2007) documented alumni financial contributions and infrastructure donations; URC surveys reported positive campus climate and interpersonal relations.

S – Servant Leadership: Jalando-on (2024) found high servant leadership practices with

significant positive relationships to faculty normative commitment (emotional healing, putting followers first, helping grow, ethical behavior); no differences across demographics.

P – Pastoral Leadership: Missionary presidents (1905 onward) were ordained pastors (Nelson & Herradura, 1981); first four Filipino presidents were not pastors; contemporary return under Rev. Dr. Dagohoy reaffirms pastoral leadership for identity preservation.

I – Incorporation of Core Values: Java et al. (2025) found majority awareness and satisfaction with values integration in SEAL classes; formal articulation (Jalando-on, 2019) institutionalized via Management Review Meeting (August 4, 2018).

R – Baptist Leadership Role: CPU Constitution mandates CPBC representation on Board of Trustees (Jalando-on, 2007); partnerships with Filamer Christian University, Iloilo Mission Hospital, Capiz Emmanuel Hospital, International Ministries reinforce identity.

I – Integration of Fides: Java et al. (2025) documented values embedded in SEAL pedagogy; Sian (2024) found relationships between spiritual awareness, attitude, and commitment; Core Values included in faculty syllabi (Jalando-on, 2019).

T – Total Development: URC surveys showed high academic, spiritual, climate, support ratings; Java et al. (2025) found students developed self-awareness, emotional maturity, empathy through SEAL; Jalando-on (2007) noted sports, stewardship, cultural activities for balanced lifestyle.

Objective 3: To examine the alignment between espoused institutional ideals and empirical outcomes.

Convergent evidence demonstrates robust alignment across domains. Spiritual dimensions align: Christ-centered mission (Jalando-on et al., 2023) matches URC spiritual satisfaction means 95–97 and Sian's (2024) high commitment findings. Values and leadership align core values policies (Jalando-on, 2019) align with Java et al.'s (2025) student transformation findings and Jalando-on's (2024) servant leadership-commitment relationships. Relational and academic align: "family/home" emphasis (Giron-Importante, 2007) aligns with positive campus climate ratings; academic excellence commitments align with high instructional quality. Divergent evidence: scholarship satisfaction decline (75.76, down from 80.2) represents tension between espoused liberating education and resource constraints.

Objective 4: To identify implications for sustaining faith-based organizational culture in contemporary higher education.

Five implications emerge: (1) intentional leadership modeling given servant leadership-commitment relationships (Jalando-on, 2024) and pastoral leadership patterns; (2) ongoing faith-learning integration from SEAL impacts (Java et al., 2025) and high spiritual satisfaction; (3) strategic resource allocation from declining scholarship satisfaction; (4) relational and alumni reinforcement to counter early camaraderie decline (Jalando-on, 2007); (5) regular cultural monitoring beyond academic metrics to detect dilution risks.

DISCUSSION

This section interprets the synthesized evidence presented in Results, focusing on three overarching themes: (1) the CENTRAL SPIRIT as a coherent multi-level cultural system; (2) mechanisms of alignment between espoused ideals and empirical outcomes; and (3) implications for sustaining faith-based organizational culture. Rather than reiterating findings already presented under Objective 2, this discussion elaborates their meaning, integrates theoretical perspectives, and draws forward-looking implications.

The CENTRAL SPIRIT as a Coherent Multi-Level Cultural System. The synthesized manifestations of the 13 CENTRAL SPIRIT dimensions, presented in Results (Objective 2),

collectively reveal a cultural system operating at multiple levels consistent with Schein's (2010) model of organizational culture. At the artifact level, tangible expressions include worship practices, Christ Emphasis Week (CEW), prayer before classes, the University Church, Scripture visibility across campus, and the formal publication of CPU Core Values (Jalando-on, 2007; Jalando-on, 2019). These artifacts are not incidental traditions but intentional cultural practices that orient the university toward a Christ-centered life.

At the espoused values level, the CENTRAL SPIRIT dimensions articulate explicit commitments: servant leadership (S), pastoral leadership (P), incorporation of core values (I), integration of *Fides* in all studies (I), and total development of the person (T). These values have been progressively institutionalized through policy mechanisms, including the Management Review Meeting of August 4, 2018, which codified core values as operational standards, and the alignment of institutional outcomes with faith-based graduate attributes (Jalando-on et al., 2023). The transition from implicit tradition to explicit governance reflects what Schein (2010) describes as the essential process of cultural articulation for organizational sustainability.

At the deepest basic assumptions level, Giron-Importante (2007) identified that Centralians themselves define the Central Spirit not only sociologically as belongingness, but also theologically as the indwelling Spirit of God uniting hearts. This dual definition, organizational and spiritual, positions CPU's culture as fundamentally different from secular institutions.

The assumption that education is ministry, that leadership is service, and that academic excellence is inseparable from Christian character operates as taken-for-granted reality for most Centralians, as evidenced by the uniformity of servant leadership perceptions across demographic groups (Jalando-on, 2024) and the vocational consciousness reported by faculty and staff (Jalando-on, 2007).

This multi-level coherence distinguishes the CENTRAL SPIRIT from mere institutional branding. The framework functions as what Hofstede (1991) terms a "collective programming of the mind," shaping how members perceive their work, relationships, and institutional purpose. The "family/home" metaphors documented by Giron-Importante (2007) reflect deep communal attachment that transcends individual self-interest, manifesting in alumni loyalty, financial contributions, and infrastructure donations (Jalando-on, 2007).

Mechanisms of Alignment Between Ideals and Outcomes. Results (Objective 3) demonstrated robust alignment between espoused Baptist-Christian ideals and empirical outcomes across spiritual (URC means 95–97), leadership (servant leadership-commitment relationships), and academic (high instructional quality) domains. The Discussion now interprets how this alignment is achieved and sustained through three interconnected mechanisms.

Structural Embedding. Alignment begins with governance and policy structures that encode faith commitments into institutional operations. The CPU Constitution and By-Laws mandate representation from Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches (CPBC) member churches on the Board of Trustees (Jalando-on, 2007), ensuring theological accountability at the highest decision-making level. Core values were institutionalized through formal policy (Jalando-on, 2019) rather than left to individual discretion. Curricular requirements now mandate faith integration in syllabi across disciplines, transforming *Fides* from extracurricular supplement to pedagogical framework. These structural mechanisms create what scholars' term "cultural scaffolding" or the formal architecture that supports informal cultural transmission.

Behavioral Modeling. The centrality of servant and pastoral leadership represents the second mechanism. Jalando-on (2024) demonstrated that servant leadership practices, particularly emotional healing, putting followers first, helping followers grow, and ethical behavior,

show significant positive relationships with faculty normative commitment. This finding is significant because normative commitment reflects moral obligation and loyalty beyond contractual reasons, precisely the kind of deep identification that characterizes strong organizational cultures. The uniformity of servant leadership perceptions across sex, age, employment status, and religion suggests this is not dependent on individual personalities but reflects a deeply embedded leadership culture. Historically, from missionary presidents (most ordained pastors) to the contemporary pastoral leadership under Rev. Dr. Dagohoy, leaders have functioned as cultural stewards who model the values they seek to transmit. The 2007 survey revealed mixed views on pastoral leadership. Most supported it though some raised managerial competence concerns. This suggests that pastoral leadership is affirmed when combined with demonstrated administrative competence (Jalando-on, 2007). This indicates that cultural modeling must be accompanied by professional credibility.

Ritual and Narrative Reinforcement. The third mechanism operates through recurring rituals and collective narratives. CEW, documented by Sian (2024), demonstrates complete awareness among students and alumni, very positive attitudes, and high Christian commitment. Worship practices, prayer before classes and meetings, and the presence of the University Church create regular rhythms of spiritual formation (Jalando-on, 2007). Giron-Importante (2007) demonstrated that collective memory, stories of missionaries, post-war rebuilding, leadership transitions, and alumni sacrifice, sustains the Central Spirit across generations. However, Jalando-on (2007) noted the absence of a formal curriculum devoted to institutional history, a gap that risks weakening cultural continuity. The publication of institutional histories and philosophical documents (Jalando-on et al., 2023) reflects ongoing efforts to address this through narrative preservation.

Tensions and Adaptive Responses. The synthesized evidence also reveals tensions that illuminate the dynamic nature of cultural sustainability. The perceived imbalance between *Scientia* and *Fides* documented in the 2007 survey has been addressed through the mechanisms described above, as evidenced by consistently high spiritual satisfaction ratings across all stakeholder groups in AY 2024–2025. This represents successful adaptive response to an earlier cultural vulnerability.

The decline in scholarship satisfaction (75.76, down from 80.2) represents an emerging tension. While still in the "Satisfied" range, this decline signals resource constraints that threaten the liberating function of education, a core dimension of the Central Spirit (E). This tension illustrates that faith-based commitments require not only philosophical affirmation but also strategic investment. The missionary heritage of work-study programs and scholarship systems (Jalando-on, 2007) must be continually resourced to remain viable.

The early signs of declining camaraderie noted by Jalando-on (2007) in relation to perceptions of growing impersonality and increasing professionalization suggest that relational culture requires deliberate reinforcement. While URC surveys continue to show positive campus climate and interpersonal relations, the "family/home" metaphors that define Centralian identity cannot be taken for granted. Intergenerational transmission requires intentional programming: convocations, alumni homecomings, campus worship, and mentoring.

Theoretical Contributions. The CENTRAL SPIRIT framework contributes to organizational culture literature in two ways. First, it demonstrates how an institution-specific acrostic can serve as an empirically grounded analytical lens, bridging insider cultural knowledge with systematic research methods. Rather than imposing external theoretical frameworks, the CENTRAL SPIRIT emerged from CPU's own historical and cultural context yet provides transferable insights for other faith-based institutions facing secularization pressures, generational change, and market-driven higher education.

Second, the framework illustrates the integration of Schein's (2010) three levels of culture with Hofstede's (1991) emphasis on collective identity. The CENTRAL SPIRIT operates simultaneously as artifact (the acrostic itself, worship practices, core values booklet), espoused value (servant leadership, faith integration), and basic assumption (education as ministry, the indwelling Spirit). This integration across levels explains the culture's resilience: when formal policies change or leaders transition, the deeper assumptions and ritual practices sustain continuity.

Implications for Sustaining Faith-Based Culture. The interpretive analysis supports five implications for sustaining faith-based organizational culture, directly extending the findings presented in Results (Objective 4).

First, intentional leadership modeling and succession planning are essential. The significant relationships between servant leadership and faculty commitment (Jalando-on, 2024), combined with the historical pattern of pastoral leadership, indicate that leadership development should prioritize emotional intelligence, ethical empowerment, and community-building alongside managerial competence. Mentoring programs and leadership pipelines can ensure continuity during transitions.

Second, deepened faith-learning integration across all disciplines requires ongoing faculty development. While SEAL classes demonstrate successful values integration (Java et al., 2025), extending this pedagogical approach across the curriculum requires sustained training, syllabi review, and assessment of faith integration.

Third, strategic resource allocation for equitable access is necessary to preserve the liberating function of education. The scholarship satisfaction decline signals vulnerability that, if unaddressed, could undermine the E dimension of CENTRAL SPIRIT. Sustainable funding strategies, expanded work-study programs, and donor engagement are practical responses.

Fourth, deliberate relational and alumni reinforcement should counter early signs of declining camaraderie. While URC surveys remain positive, the "family/home" culture requires active reproduction through homecoming events, mentoring pairings, alumni involvement in formation programs, and intergenerational storytelling.

Fifth, regular cultural monitoring beyond academic metrics is critical. The high satisfaction continuity across most dimensions should not lead to complacency. Incorporating spiritual and relational indicators into annual surveys, tracking generational shifts, and conducting periodic cultural audits would enable early detection of dilution risks and guide proactive renewal.

Summary. The CENTRAL SPIRIT framework represents a coherent multi-level cultural system sustained through structural embedding, behavioral modeling, and ritual reinforcement. Alignment between espoused ideals and empirical outcomes demonstrates successful institutionalization of faith-based values. Tensions such as scholarship satisfaction decline and early signs of camaraderie erosion signal areas requiring proactive attention. By treating the CENTRAL SPIRIT not as static slogan but as living framework, CPU can continue to exemplify mission-driven Christian education while adapting to contemporary challenges.

Conclusion. This narrative review synthesized institutional documents, dissertations (2007–2025), and University Research Center satisfaction surveys (AY 2024–2025) to address four research objectives: (1) to describe the documented cultural development of Central Philippine University from 2007 to 2025; (2) to analyze how the dimensions of the CENTRAL SPIRIT manifest in leadership practices, academic programs, and community life; (3) to examine the alignment between espoused institutional ideals and empirical outcomes; and (4) to identify implications for sustaining faith-based organizational culture in contemporary higher education.

Objective 1. Cultural Development. Synthesized sources reveal a clear trajectory across three phases. Foundational studies (Jalando-on, 2007; Giron-Importante, 2007) established the Central Spirit as a unifying force characterized by shared faith, belongingness, and vocational consciousness. Post-2019 explicit articulation (Jalando-on, 2019; Jalando-on et al., 2023) transformed implicit traditions into formal governance frameworks. Recent empirical studies (Sian, 2024; Jalando-on, 2024; Java et al., 2025) provided quantitative validation, with URC satisfaction surveys confirming sustained high spiritual vitality across students (M=95.64), faculty (M=97.13), and staff (M=96.43).

Objective 2. Manifestations of CENTRAL SPIRIT Dimensions. The 13 dimensions manifest across institutional life: spiritual vitality through worship, CEW, and prayer (C, T, R, I); servant and pastoral leadership practices that shape organizational behavior and faculty commitment (S, P); core values integration through SEAL classes and curricular requirements (I); relational culture expressed through "family/home" metaphors and alumni loyalty (L); faith-grounded academic excellence sustained through accreditation and instructional quality (A); and holistic formation encompassing intellectual, spiritual, social, and physical development (T). These manifestations, systematically mapped in the Results section, demonstrate that the CENTRAL SPIRIT operates as an empirically grounded cultural construct rather than a mere slogan.

Objective 3. Alignment Between Ideals and Outcomes. Robust alignment exists across domains. Spiritual dimensions align: Christ-centered mission matches URC satisfaction means (95–97) and high Christian commitment (Sian, 2024). Values and leadership align: core values policies correspond with student transformation (Java et al., 2025) and servant leadership-commitment relationships (Jalando-on, 2024). Relational and academic align: "family/home" emphasis aligns with positive campus climate; excellence commitments align with high instructional quality. Minor divergence in scholarship satisfaction (75.76, down from 80.2) represents tension between espoused liberating education and resource constraints, signaling an area requiring proactive attention.

Objective 4. Implications for Sustainability. The findings support five evidence-based implications: (1) intentional leadership modeling and succession planning, given servant leadership-commitment relationships and pastoral leadership patterns; (2) deepened faith-learning integration across disciplines, extending SEAL-class impacts; (3) strategic resource allocation for equitable access, addressing scholarship satisfaction decline; (4) deliberate relational and alumni reinforcement, countering early signs of declining camaraderie; and (5) regular cultural monitoring beyond academic metrics, enabling early detection of dilution risks.

The CENTRAL SPIRIT framework demonstrates that CPU successfully integrates *Scientia et Fides*, producing spiritually satisfied, relationally committed, and holistically developed constituents. The culture's resilience across generational change, leadership transitions, and external pressures reflects successful institutionalization through structural embedding, behavioral modeling, and ritual reinforcement. Ongoing challenges -- leadership succession, generational transmission, and resource pressures -- reflect normal cultural adaptation rather than erosion.

Future research could employ longitudinal designs to track cultural internalization among emerging generations, comparative analyses with other faith-based institutions to identify transferable practices, or qualitative studies exploring alumni perspectives on cultural continuity after graduation. By sustaining intentional reinforcement of the CENTRAL SPIRIT through leadership development, faith-learning integration, equitable resource strategies, relational engagement, and regular monitoring CPU can continue to exemplify mission-driven Christian education for the church, nation, and global community.

Recommendations. These recommendations emerge directly from the synthesized findings presented in this review and are organized according to the study's four research objectives. Each is grounded in empirical evidence from the sources synthesized.

Recommendations from Objective 1: Cultural Development

1.1 Establish a formal institutional history curriculum. While collective memory sustains the Central Spirit (Giron-Importante, 2007), Jalando-on (2007) noted the absence of a formal curriculum devoted to CPU's history. Developing credit-bearing courses or required orientation modules on CPU's missionary foundations, post-war rebuilding, and leadership heritage would strengthen cultural continuity.

1.2 Document and archive recent institutional developments. The trajectory from implicit tradition (pre-2007) to explicit articulation (post-2019) represents a significant cultural transition. Systematically documenting leadership decisions, policy changes, and cultural renewal efforts from this period would preserve institutional memory for future researchers and administrators.

Recommendations from Objective 2: Manifestations of CENTRAL SPIRIT Dimensions

2.1 Strengthen servant leadership pipelines. Given the significant positive relationships between servant leadership dimensions (emotional healing, putting followers first, helping followers grow, ethical behavior) and faculty normative commitment (Jalando-on, 2024), the university should implement formal mentoring programs and leadership training that explicitly develop these competencies across all admin levels.

2.2 Expand faith-learning integration beyond SEAL classes. Java et al. (2025) demonstrated successful values transformation through SEAL classes. This pedagogical approach should be extended across disciplines through faculty development workshops, syllabus review protocols, and annual assessment of faith integration outcomes.

2.3 Enhance alumni engagement mechanisms. The "family/home" metaphors and alumni loyalty documented by Giron-Importante (2007) and Jalando-on (2007) represent valuable relational capital. Intensifying homecoming events, establishing alumni mentoring programs for current students, and creating structured alumni involvement in scholarship and formation programs would reinforce the L dimension.

2.4 Develop holistic formation tracking. Total development (T) encompasses intellectual, spiritual, social, and physical dimensions. Implementing a longitudinal tracking system that monitors student development across these domains, beyond academic metrics, would enable evidence-based enhancement of formation programs.

Recommendations from Objective 3: Alignment Between Ideals and Outcomes

3.1 Address scholarship satisfaction decline. The decline in scholarship satisfaction (75.76, down from 80.2) represents a divergence between the espoused value of education as a liberating tool (E) and resource constraints. The university should develop sustainable funding strategies, expand work-study programs, and strengthen donor engagement to preserve equitable access for economically marginalized students.

3.2 Monitor faith-academics integration continuously. While high spiritual satisfaction ratings (95–97) indicate successful resolution of earlier faith-academics imbalance concerns, regular monitoring through annual surveys and focus groups would ensure this alignment persists amid demographic and curricular changes.

3.3 Strengthen cultural consciousness of governance structures. Jalando-on (2007) revealed limited awareness among faculty, staff, and alumni regarding CPBC representation in governance and denominational affiliations. Ongoing formation programs and transparent communication about these structural arrangements would close the gap between institutional design and cultural consciousness.

Recommendations from Objective 4: Sustaining Faith-Based Organizational Culture

4.1 Establish regular cultural-spiritual monitoring. The overall high satisfaction continuity across most dimensions should not lead to complacency. Incorporating spiritual and relational indicators into annual URC surveys, tracking generational shifts in values internalization, and conducting periodic cultural audits would enable early detection of dilution risks and guide proactive renewal.

4.2 Develop intentional leadership succession planning. The historical pattern of pastoral leadership and the contemporary return to this model (Jalando-on, 2007; Nelson & Herradura, 1981) underscore the importance of leadership continuity. Formal succession planning, including identification and development of potential leaders who embody the Central Spirit, would ensure smooth transitions.

4.3 Counter declining camaraderie through intergenerational programming. Early signs of declining camaraderie and growing impersonality (Jalando-on, 2007) suggest the "family/home" culture requires deliberate reproduction. Structured intergenerational programs—pairing alumni with current students, faculty mentorship initiatives, and sustained campus traditions would reinforce relational bonds.

4.4 Allocate resources to preserve the liberating function of education. The E dimension, which is education as liberating tool, is foundational to CPU's missionary heritage. Strategic resource allocation, including scholarship endowments, expanded work-study positions, and partnerships with donor networks, is essential to sustain this commitment amid financial pressures.

These targeted actions, grounded in the review's evidence of strong alignment and adaptive resilience, will help CPU maintain the Central Spirit as a living, mission-sustaining framework amid contemporary challenges.

Author contributions. Francis Neil G. Jalando-on: Introduction, Discussion, References | Hermely A. Jalando-on: Methods, Results

Conflict of interest statement. The authors declare no conflicts of interest. Both authors are affiliated with Central Philippine University, the institution examined in this study. To minimize potential bias, the following steps were taken: critical appraisal of sources against established quality criteria (Baumeister & Leary, 1997); reflexive analysis to address assumptions arising from institutional affiliation; cross-verification of empirical claims against original source materials; and transparent acknowledgment of limitations in the Methods section, including insider bias and social desirability effects. Additionally, all dissertations included in this review underwent evaluation by external experts serving as panel members outside the university, providing an independent layer of quality assurance. These procedures strengthen the objectivity and credibility of the study.

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